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Environmental News: Celebrating the Biggest Conservation Wins of 2017 and more

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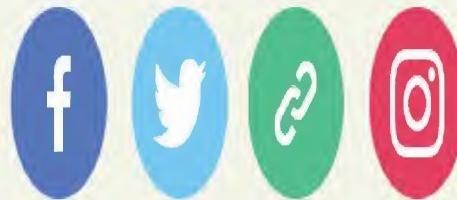


December

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Critical information about the environment delivered weekly



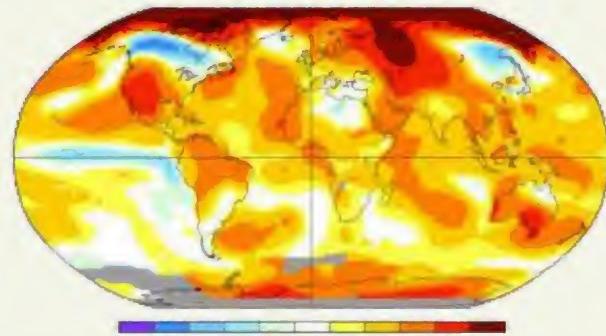
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“Until we have the courage to recognize cruelty for what it is... we cannot

expect things to be much better in this world... We cannot have peace among men whose hearts delight in killing any living creature. By every act that glorifies or even tolerates such moronic delight in killing we set back the progress of humanity." ~Rachel Carson

2017 Will Rank Among Earth's Top 5 Warmest Years

This year will almost certainly rank as one of the planet's top five warmest years on record, according to new data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and NASA.



In fact, the top NASA climate scientist reported Monday that 2017 is likely to be the second-warmest year on record, behind 2016, which in turn displaced 2015 from the top spot.

NOAA, on the other hand, predicts that, barring an unforeseen, large-scale cold snap, this year will rank as the third-warmest year in its database. These two science agencies use different methods to rank years, but base their information on similar underlying data comprised of thousands of surface weather stations and buoys at sea. Take a closer look at the data on [Mashable](#).

USDA Gives in to Big 'Organic' Poultry, Moves to Withdraw New Animal Welfare Rules



Monday, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) formally proposed withdrawing a set of rules finalized at the end of the Obama administration that establish stronger, more enforceable animal welfare requirements for certified organic producers.

The rules, titled the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices rule, are the product of more than a decade of collaboration and coordination among the organic community, including consumers, farmers, veterinarians, environmentalists and animal welfare groups. Unfortunately, a few large-scale egg producers fear the new rules will expose their less-than-organic practices and put pressure on USDA and Congress to stop the rule. Learn more at [EcoWatch](#).

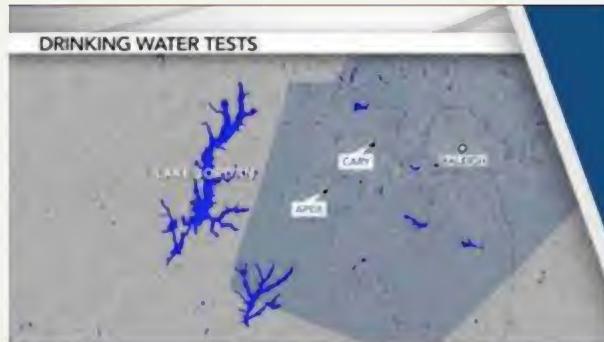
These Butterflies Have Lawyers

This week attorneys representing the North American Butterfly Association filed a suit against the Trump administration for its plan to build a section of the U.S.-Mexico border wall through a significant portion of the National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas. The construction plan would cut off the organization's access "to no less than two-thirds of the Butterfly Center property" just north of the Rio Grande River, according to the lawsuit.



The lawsuit was officially filed Monday against the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the agencies responsible for building and patrolling the wall. Watch the video footage of destruction caused by the “border wall” at [EcoWatch](#)

Elevated Levels of Unregulated Chemicals Found in Jordan Lake, Cary Drinking Water



Researchers at Duke University have discovered elevated levels of several perfluorinated compounds – an unregulated family of industrial chemicals including some that can raise cancer risks – in Jordan Lake and drinking water treated by Cary.

Cary water treatment officials, who have independently confirmed the findings of Duke researchers, say the town's water is safe to drink. They also point out that the compounds detected are still below health advisory levels set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Learn more of the details from [WRAL.com](#).

It's Time to Rethink Chemical Exposures —“Safe” Levels are Doing Damage

Some of the most common, extensively tested chemicals — radon, lead, particulate matter, asbestos, tobacco and benzene — appear to be proportionally more harmful to a person's health at the lower levels of exposure, according to a new review of decades of research.



"Not only is there no apparent safe levels or thresholds, but at the lowest levels of exposure, there is a steeper increase in the risk," said author Dr. Bruce Lanphear, a professor and researcher at Simon Fraser University.

The key word here is proportionally—smoking three packs of cigarettes a day for 40 years is obviously worse for your lungs than a little secondhand smoke from time to time. However, the point is that for the nonsmoker exposed to secondhand smoke, the risk is "extraordinarily large," Lanphear said. Learn more at [Environmental Health News](#).

**University of Minnesota Duluth Professor
Resigns from Board of Enbridge-Backed Group
in Response to PAI Report**



"Last month we published a [report](#) that uncovered the undisclosed conflicts of interest and fossil fuel industry funding surrounding a University of Minnesota Duluth economic impact study on Enbridge's Line 3 pipeline replacement. As a result, Minnesota

Native News now [reports](#) that a key UMD faculty member has resigned from the board of the industry-backed organization that commissioned the study and withdrawn his institute's membership.

Our report, "Enbridge to Nowhere: How Fossil Fuel Interests Funded, Influenced, and Promoted the University of Minnesota Duluth's Line 3 Pipeline Study," noted the deep ties that Enbridge has to the UMD study. We showed that Enbridge is a funder and director of the organization, APEX, that commissioned the UMD study, and that Enbridge provided the report's data inputs." Learn more at [LittleSis](#).

Celebrating the Biggest Conservation Wins of 2017

Although the year of 2017 has been a unique year in terms of environmental protections and animal welfare, "It's been a big year for conservation."

We would like to celebrate with some updates from

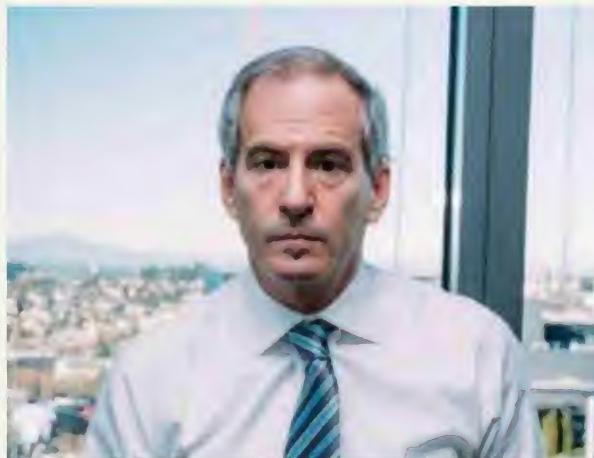


[EcoWatch](#) regarding the conservation wins.

"Together we assured the world that the U.S. is still an ally in the fight against [climate change](#) through the We Are Still In movement, a coalition of more than 2,500 American leaders outside of the federal government who are still committed to meeting climate goals. WWF's activists met with legislators to voice their support for international conservation funding. And we ensured that Bhutan's vast and [wildlife](#)-rich areas remain protected forever through long-term funding.

As 2017 comes to a close, we're taking a moment to highlight some of our biggest conservation successes of the year. We couldn't have done it without your support." Read more on conservation victories at [EcoWatch](#).

Meet the Lawyer Trying to Make Big Oil Pay for Climate Change



Berman is now working on a lawsuit that could be even bigger: He is suing five of the world's most powerful oil companies for causing climate change. He represents Oakland and San Francisco in a lawsuit filed last September demanding that Exxon, Shell, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, and BP

pay billions for sea walls and other defenses against ocean rise.

Just like with tobacco, the case could hinge on whether these companies lied to

the public about the dangers of their business model. Berman has evidence that companies like Exxon knew burning oil causes climate change as early as the 1950s. Internally, oil companies took steps to protect their offshore oil rigs and Arctic pipelines from global warming while publicly they denied the science—the same way cigarette makers did research into cancer while denying their product was harmful. “Defendants stole a page from the Big Tobacco playbook,” the lawsuit alleges. Learn more from [Vice](#).

The Rachel Carson Council, founded in 1965, is the national environmental organization envisioned by Rachel Carson to carry on her work after her death. We promote Carson's ecological ethic that combines scientific concern for the environment and human health with a sense of wonder and reverence for all forms of life in order to build a sustainable, just, and peaceful future.

Over the years we at RCC have been devoted to providing you the public with important, timely information about the environment. RCC exists because of donations from individuals like you.

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